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Graveyard Holds Secrets Of Coastal Town's Past

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS

Most towns have a history buried deep in the annals of town records and documents, taking its lifelong residents back to their roots and connecting them to their hometown.

But when a curious, history-loving, 11-year-old girl stumbles across the records of her people and her town, Gumbo Grove, S.C., it stirs up a few memories that not too many people want to remember.

What starts out as a chore cleaning the old church cemetery soon turns into a mission to save the cemetery from destruction at the hands of Miss Aussie and her politician friends.

With the help of Miss Effie, an elderly church secretary, the brave Raisin Stackhouse sets out to discover why several prominent community members are making such a fuss about a particular past resident—whose body lies buried in the cemetery.

It seems that in the black section of this waterfront town in the 1980s, people don't like to talk about slavery and the hard times that blacks went through to stand on their own feet.

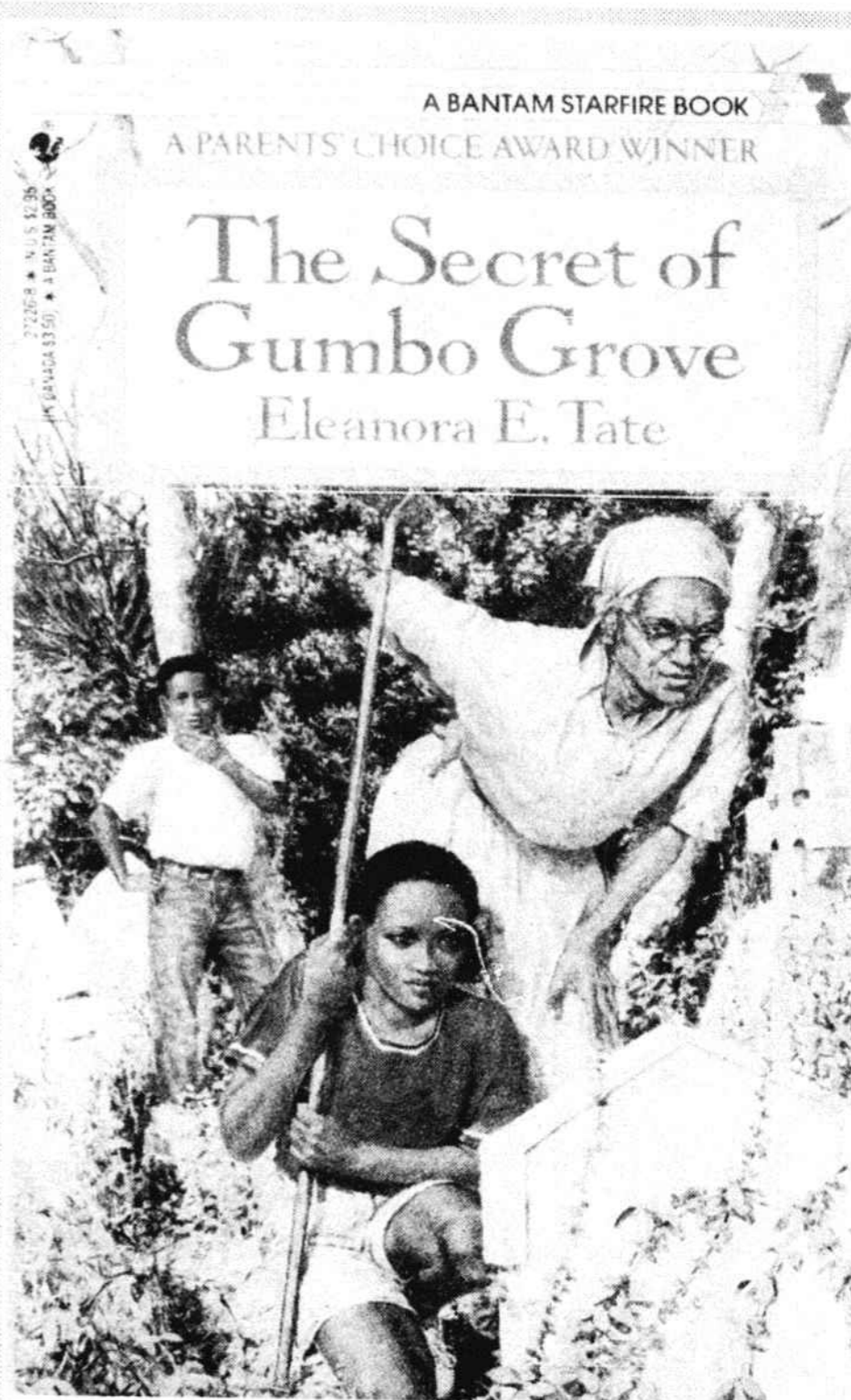
Raisin ignores threats from the vocal group of residents trying to stop her and fights her parents, her friends and Miss Aussie to bring out the truth about the man and about Gumbo Grove's origins. Why was he buried in New Africa Cemetery and his name never mentioned again by members of either the black or white communities?

What she uncovers, however, shows the townspeople how influential and independent blacks were before economic hard times helped the whites put most of them out of business and into the downtrodden area of town. Her discovery also suggests how the town's blacks could regain their former status if allowed to learn from their ancestors' achievements.

Eleanora Tate's fictional account describes Gumbo Grove in surprisingly vivid, present-day detail. A resident of South Carolina who apparently writes from familiarity, Ms. Tate mentions nearby Atlantic Beach, her current homebase of Myrtle Beach, and on into North Carolina, including Brunswick

BOOK REVIEW *The Secret Of Gumbo Grove*

BY ELEANORA E. TATE
©1987, Bantam Starfire Paperback (1988), 199 pgs.



WHILE WRITTEN FOR a juvenile audience, *The Secret of Gumbo Grove* by Myrtle Beach, S.C., author Eleanora Tate offers adults a good, fast read as well.

County's own Shallotte.

The town of Gumbo Grove is more than likely based on a combination of Cherry Grove and Myrtle Beach, whose beach tourists and colorful Pavilion are painted picture perfect by Ms. Tate. Anyone who has experienced the Grand Strand should warm up to the story's local flavor easily.

The story and its delightful mystery are enhanced by the first-person thought patterns of the adolescent girl. Mixed with the suspense are humorous anecdotes of Raisin's dealing with her obnoxious younger sisters, getting around her parents, and getting away from Big Boy, the 14-year-old girl who bullies all the other kids.

You won't find too many novels that relate the perils of riding a bike

through town, frantically searching for a bathroom in which to relieve a full bladder.

Most surprising of all is that the story is quite entertaining for adults, even though it is acceptable for readers age 10 years and older. When so many forms of entertainment are filled with four-letter words, drugs and violence, it's refreshing to be engrossed by a plot without those devices.

The book's Parent's Choice Award Winner.

Other works by Eleanora Tate include *Just An Overnight Guest*, which was produced as a film for Phoenix Films Inc. It was also on the list of "Selected Films for Young Adults 1985" by the Young Adult Committee of the American Library Association.

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